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# The Importance of Immunizing Your Child

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Why is it important for a child to receive all of his or her recommended vaccinations? Vaccines help prevent diseases that cause health problems and death by providing the vaccinated individual with immunity to the organisms that cause the diseases. It can take the body up to a couple of weeks to develop immunity to an infection.

If an unvaccinated individual becomes exposed to the organism, he or she may be sick the entire time while waiting for the body to develop defenses against the disease. A previously vaccinated individual already has those defenses in place and may not get sick if he or she is exposed to the disease. Vaccines also prevent vaccinated children from passing the disease on to other children and adults. For example, the MMR vaccine protects against measles, mumps, and rubella — diseases that can cause severe illness, infection of the brain, sterility and damage to an unborn child. The HPV vaccine protects against viruses that can cause genital warts and cervical cancer.

When should a child not receive a vaccination? Some children with compromised immune systems might need to wait to receive a vaccination. Children with allergic reactions to a vaccine or to vaccine components should not receive further doses of that vaccine.

Vaccines are generally safe. A child may have mild soreness at the vaccination site, mild soreness and a mild fever. Serious side effects are rare and side effects are monitored to ensure vaccine safety.

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